First published as:
Keane, Michael A (2001) By the way, FUCK YOU! Feng Xiaogang's disturbing TV dramas. ***Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*** **15(1):pp. 57-66.**

By the way, FUCK YOU!
Feng Xiaogang's disturbing television dramas

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ABSTRACT
This paper examines three television dramas directed by the Chinese director Feng Xiaogang during the 1990s. These are *Beijingers in New York* (1993), *Chicken Feathers* (1994) and *The Dark Side of the Moon* (1997). The principal argument is that the three can be read as indicative of new modalities of freedom, expressed respectively as ambition, hope and desire. The serials also articulate a number of moral dilemmas facing intellectuals who contemplate a career in business.

***xia hai*: To leave the security of the state work unit and jump into the sea of commerce; to go to Hainan Special Economic Zone to make money.**

The success, both in China and abroad, of the 1993 television serial *Beijingers in New York* (*Beijing ren zai NiuYue*) helped establish the career of director Feng Xiaogang. At the time of production Feng was associated with the Beijing Television Arts Centre, the Beijing Television (BTV) drama production house that reaped the financial rewards from the serial's success. However Feng Xiaogang had to share the critical accolades with the senior director in the joint production – China Central Television's Zheng Xiaolong. Following the economic success of *Beijingers in New York* Feng assumed sole responsibility for several television serials and movies, in the process developing a creative association with the prolific writer of novels, screenplays and tele-dramas, Wang Shuo.[1]

Beijingers in New York is a tale of human frailty and imploding social values. The production succeeded in exploiting well-worn negative stereotypes of American society including selfishness and greed, while paradoxically endorsing motifs of opportunism, agency, and achievement. These individualised motifs would be fleshed out in a more sustained manner in Feng Xiaogang's later works. *Beijingers* presents the American odyssey of a Beijing cello player, Wang Qiming, who in the space of a few 45-minute episodes manages to morph from subaltern existence into a nuvo-rich manager wielding power over other peoples' lives, as well as being master of his own destiny. In the spirit of the Marxist dialectic, however, contradictions abound. This rite-of-passage in American capitalism manages somehow to justify commercial exploitation as a revolutionary cause. In the early episodes, Wang swears to the memory of Chairman Mao that he will be rich. His revolutionary zeal to succeed is subsequently fuelled by revenge when his wife leaves and marries the American boss of a sweatshop company. Humiliated, Wang then starts up a rival garment enterprise, and with the financial help of a Taiwanese businesswoman, A Chun, he gains the upper hand. As Wang Qiming walks away from his first success on the economic battlefield, he

turns to his American adversary and confidently proclaims his first complete sentence in English, 'By the way, FUCK YOU!'

Three studies of freedom in urban China

In this paper I examine three television dramas directed by Feng Xiaogang. These are the above-mentioned *Beijingers in New York*, as well as *Chicken Feathers on the Ground* (*Yidi jimao*) (1994) and *The Dark Side of the Moon* (*Yueliang beimian*) (1997). The principal argument is that the three can be read as indicative of new modalities of freedom, expressed respectively as ambition, hope and desire. As Rose (1999) argues following Isaiah Berlin, freedom can be expressed two ways; first in the sense of the individual being left alone to do as they wish without interference; second, as a kind of governmentally administered freedom aimed at enabling the functioning of the marketplace. This dual notion of freedom has implications for understanding the nature of power in contemporary China. I argue that power, like the economic sphere it has served to administer, has been 'reformed' under new alignments of political, social and economic capital. The deregulation of power has in turn given rise to a desire for personal freedom of the first instance, that is the desire or opportunity to do as one wishes free from social convention or governmental interference. In fact it is the nature of governmental intervention that has been subject to modification. Freedom, expressed as the desire for material fulfilment, enables the Chinese leadership to promote its reform agenda.

The notion of freedom (*ziyou*) weaves itself through contemporary television drama programming, destabilising the pedagogic role of public broadcasting most evident in news and documentary programs. Formats such as the melodramatic soap (*shenghuo pian*) and the business drama (*shangye pian*) became popular during the 1990s, chronicling the non-political lives of ordinary Chinese citizens aspiring to inherit some of the prosperity promised by Deng Xiaoping's reforms. In comparison with the freedom offered by communism, that of a utopia where all needs will be met - a freedom endlessly deferred – the freedom of the market held the promise of instant gratification and a life of material comfort. The list of television dramas that qualify in the above categories is endless, particularly if we include the many soap operas that are broadcast in China from the commercial television markets of Taiwan, SAR Hong Kong and Singapore (see Keane 2001).

The motif of freedom appears regularly in the work of Feng Xiaogang. Although probably more widely known for movies such as *Jiafang yifang* (*Under Contract*) (1998), and *Bujian busan* (Waiting for You) (1999) (see Dai Jinhua, 2000), Feng has produced several critically acclaimed but commercially unsuccessful television serials. After his experience as a script-writer for the 1991 hit comedy *Stories From an Editorial Office* (*Bianji bu de gushi*), Feng took up a directorial role with *Beijingers in New York*, produced by the Beijing Television Arts Centre in collaboration with the television drama production unit of China Central Television (CCTV). The next year Feng directed *Chicken Feathers on the Ground* (*Yidi jimao*), based on two novellas by the contemporary author Liu Zhenyun. *Chicken Feathers* was initially banned in Beijing, no doubt due to its grim portrayal of corruption and backstabbing within a Chinese government work-unit.

In 1997 Feng assembled some of the same cast and produced a visually stimulating and politically disturbing work that again earned the scorn of officials. Suitably titled *The Dark Side of the Moon* (*Yueliang beimian)*, it never made it on to the small screen, and if it had, it is likely that it would have rated abysmally. Its slow-moving and cynical narrative about two small time criminals who become trapped in the web of criminal life is hardly prime time family viewing in China. One can only wonder what might have happened had this serial been conceived as a movie, or had Feng Xiaogang the same opportunity as Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige to attract the attention of Western art cinema audiences.

Feng Xiaogang himself made no apologies for the non-commercial nature of these television serials. Speaking about *Chicken Feathers* and *Dark Side of the Moon*, he said, 'My principle is to make works that express how life touches upon a certain kind of individual and to do so in a multidimensional fashion . . . Whereas *Chicken Feathers* expressed how the realities of life change a person's desires, the *Dark Side of the Moon* expresses how desires can change a person's life, how desire can destroy a person: it is an existential tragedy.' (interview with Keane & Tao, 1999)

As I discuss below, a lot has been written and said about *Beijingers*. The other two serials have not been widely discussed, in part because they were both non-mainstream productions, one of which was strangled at birth by censors.[2] Nonetheless, there are some interesting comparisons. Apart from the continuity in personnel, what links the three is their capacity to express the changing relationship between power and freedom in China: a motif that has not been taken up in critiques. In my opinion, what is most interesting is that the three dramas represent how ideas about freedom impact upon intellectuals – a social stratum who sense the opportunities of the market but lack market expertise. The serials articulate in different ways a number of moral dilemmas facing intellectuals who contemplate a career in business.

I will present brief synopses to illustrate how the notion of freedom as it appears in the narratives is embedded within market principles. These three dramas are extremely complex works and my focus is accordingly limited. I also provide some ethnographic evidence which suggests that *Beijingers* is indeed a very open text, and not just a diatribe against Western values, as some commentators have suggested. I contend that Chinese viewers, long exposed to the idea of deviant characters in foreign cinematic and television products, were seemingly less concerned with the moral bankruptcy of the protagonists and more interested in their aberrant, risk-taking conduct in the context of day to day existence. The theme of risk is extended in the two non-mainstream dramas. Together, the three serials exemplify various manifestations of *Homo economicus*, the hero of the market, the 'man' of the times. Following these brief synopses I will explore some theoretical concerns arising from the narratives.

Ambition, hope and desire

Beijingers in New York remains a landmark production for the Chinese television industry. The 21-episode serial was shot in the Big Apple, with the opening sequences of each episode creatively exploiting the spectacular modernity of the gateway to world capitalism. Ambitious, controversial, and expensive to produce by Chinese television industry standards[3], *Beijingers* contained enough representations of decadent conduct to make Melrose Place seem like a promotion for family values. This kind of Chinese serial could only have been 'made in America'. Unsurprisingly, the serial achieved extraordinary ratings, particularly in north China.[4]

Beijingers dramatised the exploits of a Beijing couple who immigrate to New York during the early 1980s.[5] However its mass appeal seemed to derive an often-voyeuristic fascination with Western-style conspicuous consumption and dilemmas of how to behave in a market economy. As mentioned above, the family unit is a casualty of Wang's desire for material success: his wife Guo Yan moves into an unsuccessful marriage with the American business adversary, and his daughter, Ningning, becomes estranged from both parents after arriving in the U.S. She somehow emerges as a survivor amid the wreckage of the Chinese family. At the same time Wang takes up with a Taiwanese mistress.

While gaining the approval of Chinese cultural officials – a *fait accompli* given its success, *Beijingers* attracted a deal of derogatory comment from scholars both within Chinese academies and outside China. In the main, most chose to single out the overt nationalism portrayed in the serial (Barmé 1995); the clash of Western and Chinese values; the overdrawn characterisation of an intellectual turned feral businessman (Wang Yulong, 1993; Fan Ren, 1993; Xu Jinlin, 1994); and the chauvinism and anti-feminism of the main protagonist (Zhong Yong, 1995). One expatriate writer really sunk the boot in, suggesting that the ingredients were a combination of xenophobia, patriotism, male chauvinism, spectacular scenic shots and anti-imperialism (Zha Xiduo, 1994). A recent critique by Lydia Liu manages to tie the production and the narrative of exploitation into circuits of international capital and international divisions of labour. Liu argues that the television production turned the original novel by Glen Cao into a 'sensational showcase of transnational entrepreneurship' (Liu, 1999: 764).[6] Moreover, there was an underlying sentiment expressed in many critiques that Jiang Wen (the film actor who played Wang Qiming) had made a bad career move opting for a crass television drama. In fact, Jiang's performance was outstanding in an abysmally unrealistic narrative that over-exaggerated the power of Chinese males in Western society, while at the same time devaluing the experiences of Chinese women (Zhong Yong, 1995).[7]

If the series *Beijingers in New York* portrayed images of conspicuous consumption and rather grandiose statements about success, the series *Chicken feathers* represents how ideas about self and identity are constructed in the quotidian practices of everyday life as much as by political discourses. Adapted from the novellas *Yidi jimao* and *Danwei* by Liu Zhenyun, it was originally intended to be directed by Zhang Yuan, the director of *Beijing zazhong* (*Beijing Bastards*) and *Mama*. After Zhang Yuan's participation was prohibited by cultural officials, the task of directing was passed to Feng Xiaogang.

Chicken Feathers contrives to be more socialist realism art cinema than mass culture. The production is minimalist, with the camera observing rather than intruding. A languid electric guitar insinuates a sense of ennui throughout as the main protagonist, Xiao Lin (Chen Daoming) negotiates the mundane rituals of work relationships and the complexities of daily life outside the work unit. In this short drama a scientific work unit serves as a metonymic reference to the Chinese state apparatus. The viewer is thus given a composite picture of life in contemporary urban China. Xiao Lin, having graduated from university, finds himself at the bottom of the power hierarchy in the work unit. Very soon after life becomes more complicated when his lover, Li Jing (Xu Fan) falls pregnant. From this point onwards it seems that the couple's expectations about the kind of life they will lead come into contact with the hard realities of everyday life. Xiao Lin finds that in the work unit everything has to be negotiated, alliances need to be established, and favours need to be repaid. The present and the future are both determined by the past. Reciprocity and retribution are the determining factors both within the work unit and in the sphere of everyday life. Mundane tasks prove to be major obstacles.

Throughout the narrative, the events of the work unit combined with the vicissitudes of daily existence conspire to diminish Xiao Lin's sense of altruism. The rituals of the work unit represent a constrained form of freedom in which everything must be achieved through the development of relationships. Finding appropriate housing is a major challenge. Even getting the couple's child into a kindergarten proves to be a complicated affair. This, according to director Feng, represents the question of 'big and small' (*da yu xiao*). Things may appear simple on the surface but making do in China is an intricate balancing act of relationships and favours. One day Xiao Lin meets an old friend who is selling fish in a vegetable market. His friend offers him a chance to work part-time. Initially worried about the loss of face, Xiao Lin decides to try his hand. While this is hardly intellectual work, selling fish proves to be less complicated than the problems associated with the formal structure of the work unit. Xiao Lin contemplates a new kind of freedom. The decision he and Li Jing must make therefore is what kind of life do they want, a life of security within the formal structure of the work unit or a potentially mobile and less constrained economic life in the free market.

The third study in this trilogy of freedom, *Dark Side of the Moon*, was based on the novel of the same name by Wang Gang. The story is set in the early 1990s, a time when unscrupulous entrepreneurs were taking advantage of the many loopholes in the system to procure and move capital. The mood of this story can be summed up in the phrase *qian quan se jiaoyi* (the exchange of money, power and sex). Each episode begins with a scene of the main protagonist Muni (Feng Yuanzheng) incarcerated and awaiting execution. The musical score by Rachmaninoff creates a sense of grandeur at odds with a story about petty criminality. However, the story of *Dark Side of the Moon* is complex and multi-layered. It begins when Muni, a masters graduate in Chinese literature is introduced to a bogus company called The China Television Cultural Development Centre. There he meets Li Miao (Xu Fan), who has also just started work. They are assigned to win the trust of a bank manager on the pretence that the company will produce a television documentary on the history of the bank, featuring the manager as a hero of economic reform. In actual fact the bank manager is being set up. As they enter the bank they encounter the villain Cong Xiaobo (Ye Jing), who is there to borrow money from the bank manager. While Cong has no success in getting his money he recognises the scam that Muni and Li Miao are concocting.

The bank manager is impressed by the erudite charm of Muni and the sensual beauty of Li Miao and agrees to cooperate. The couple then buy a fake stamp which gives them the legal authority to set up a 'suit-case company' (*pibao gongsi*). The idea here is to use the façade of a company to establish relationships within the political and business world. By now the pair have become lovers and schemers. However, they require more capital to go to the next stage. After unsuccessful attempts to obtain money from relatives and old

friends, Muni is depressed. Li Miao decides she can raise the money by sleeping with the villain Cong Xiaobo who they had met in the bank. For Cong this is not so much a sexual commodity but a means of gaining power over Li Miao and Muni. This eventually leads to a series of blackmail and double jeopardy.

Both Muni and Li Miao find that the straight and narrow pays small dividends. At one stage Li Miao gets a hot tip from a government official to invest in the Hainan Island property market. At the time Hainan in South China was a new special economic zone (SEZ) and was experiencing a bubble economy. A common saying was that if you bought an eight-story apartment there by the time you walked down to the seventh floor it had doubled in value. However, this was not to be for Li Miao. The Hainan property bubble burst suddenly. The two lovers decide that honest toil is a mug's game.

What is significant is that in this serial all the characters are flawed, some more seriously than others. The question then is: what sense are Chinese viewers to take from this? For Muni and Li Miao the only way they can profit is though unscrupulous activities. Such activities are exploitative and unredemptive. Is this the good society promised by Deng Xiaoping's reforms? Is this what intellectuals should aspire to? Is this the field in which intellectuals should apply their talents? In the end the game of hot money, power and sex falls apart. The villain Cong Xiaobo is found shot, the assistant bank manager who was implicated in the web of deceit commits suicide and the law gradually closes in. Muni and Li Miao visit their families for the last time. The story ends when Li Miao overdoses and Muni is arrested. Bad people get their punishment. There's the moral one might say.

Three versions of freedom

In a sense *Dark Side of the Moon* and *Chicken Feathers* provide confusing messages about social reality. While it is common knowledge that the reforms in China have brought a legacy of corruption and lust for money, it is only in *Beijingers* that we see a real message of hope. Yet it was set in America! In the rush to praise or condemn *Beijingers*, what was evidently lost was the motif that made the deepest impression on Chinese viewers. The serial was ostensibly about *freedom*. I argue this point not because of a privileged Western reading but because I was teaching in Tianjin, 130 kilometres south-east of Beijing when the serial hit the screen amid much hype in October 1993. Using my class as respondents as well as classes of two other English teachers I conducted a survey immediately following the broadcast (totalling 64 responses). The classes were made up of graduate students, both male and female, who had a more rounded knowledge of Western lifestyles. Nevertheless the results were illuminating and damaging to the credibility of critics. At the time I asked for written responses to four general questions (to be answered in English and Chinese where necessary): 1. Which character do you like or dislike? 2. In your opinion is the serial realistic or true? 3. What is the real significance of the serial? 4. Do you have any other comments about the serial?

What is strikingly obvious about the responses to the question about the significance of the story was that *Beijingers* spoke about ambition. More than half of the respondents commented that the significance or message was that to succeed in life in a capitalist or commodity economy you needed to be resourceful and independent.

> Wherever one goes, one must be strong, resourceful and independent (male 27)
>
> To succeed in capitalism you must work harder and be sophisticated (female 22)
>
> A person can make big money if he works hard, can lose if he misses the opportunities (female 21)

Most of the 64 respondents (25) nominated the Taiwanese businesswoman A Chun as the favourite character while 17 registered Wang Qiming. The appeal of A Chun lay in the fact that she was successful, intelligent and independent. Wang's wife Guo Yan was least favoured, with one respondent saying that he hated her character, which was weak and 'typically Chinese'.[8]

> Wang Qiming is a real man and he knows how to get what he wants, and how to get rid of what is not needed in a new environment

Even the American business adversary, David McCarthy, received 11 votes of confidence**.** In the screenplay McCarthy turns out to be essentially honest and loyal, in contradistinction to Wang who succeeds through 'back door' tactics. This is expressed in the manner in which the American cares for Guo Yan after their relationship fails, and how he uses legal means to compete on the economic battlefield. Wang on the other hand, takes advantage of inside information from his estranged partner to defeat the American.

The serial has also been read as an example of the *xia hai* phenomenon, by which intellectuals divest themselves of their social role and move into the economy as free agents. And so, the interesting point is that the series was not read universally as a condemnation of Western values but moreover, as a prescription for a new Chinese subject formation in which the subject is a free agent. In this case, free to pursue personal wealth and success. In different ways, Wang Qiming, A Chun and the American David McCarthy emerge as models for the self-regulating individual

Chicken Feathers, on the other hand, represents a muted form of personal empowerment – the recognition that one can begin to write one's own story. It is in the inter-linkages between the private and the public domains of subject formation that one constructs such narratives of liberation. The final scene of *Chicken Feathers* is particularly interesting. Xiao Lin is sitting in a park, his wife and child are playing a word game. Xiao Lin notices a person washing a car. There appears to be something familiar. A blurred image becomes clear as the person washing the car looks up, notices Xiao Lin and begins to moves towards him while at the same time beckoning him to come across. What Xiao Lin actually sees is his double. In this moment of ambiguity the series concludes. Xiao Lin knows that there is a parallel future, one that entails taking the plunge into the world of commercial activity (*xiahai*).

In this final vignette, freedom - in its mundane representations - is construed as the interaction between government programs, rhetorics and strategies of domination and the emerging technologies of the self that entail new forms of self-reflexivity and action of 'self on self'. The ethics of self-management, in contrast with the regulated moral climate of Maoism, is predisposed towards the autonomous, responsible individual who is obliged to make life meaningful through acts of choice.

Xiao Lin's vacillation at the moment of liberation from the work unit can also be read as a significant moment in the history of the deconstruction of the Chinese welfare state, and by extension the embrace of a new relationship between people and government in China, a relationship mediated by the market. However, freedom for Xiao Lin is only attainable at the cost of alienation, risk, and uncertainty about the future. This uncertainty is being echoed in thousands of locations every day by disenchanted state employees. The very fact that this questioning of the market's capacity to provide alternative futures exists in China is testimony to the power of freedom (Rose, 1999).

There is another reading of this series that turns on the social position of the intellectual and the role of culture in forming a Chinese subjectivity. The social shaping of Chinese consciousness is no longer the sole province of the public culture of the state. Accordingly the role of the intellectual, so long tied to the state, has become marginalised, not only by the reluctance of many intellectuals to sell themselves on the cultural market, but by the emergence of alternative practices of the self dispersed in forms of popular culture: talk radio, pop music, qigong, astrology, the resurgence of traditional and folk practices, Western theories, self-help manuals, how to get rich, how to be a better manager, a better lover, and so on. According to the writer Liu Zhenyun,

> The world turns on this. Those who come later will understand. But it is a future that cannot be fathomed in any depth. I feel extremely ashamed of what is confronting our work. What do I feel about this world? I have but few thoughts. Of course in this world we are all losers.
>
> (Liu, quoted in Xie Xizhang, 1994, p. 39)

Finally *Dark Side of the Moon* illustrates the negative side of reform. Again there is the echo of the fate of the intellectual in contemporary China. But there is little light even though Feng Xiaogang's own spin is that the metaphor of the dark side of the moon represents the personal moral conflict of the characters of Muni and Li Miao. The interesting aspect, and undoubtedly the reason why the series was banned, is the

absence of the law and the lack of any model characters. The only police we see, and the only Party officials that appear, are people wearing this guise to further their base desires for money, power and sex. Unsurprisingly, cultural officials found it confusing, querying why the heroes were both criminals. The criminality of Muni and Li Miao, however, was duly punished. However, the messages impacted within this disturbing drama are confusing.

Conclusion

The emergence of *Homo economicus* is not an accident or an inevitable result of peaceful evolution of Western values. It is the new engineers of the soul - experts from the disciplines of economics, sociology and psychology - who have contributed to the deregulation of power. According to psychologist Xu Jinsheng, a new Chinese mentality has emerged phoenix-like from the collectivised rubble of egalitarian Maoism. This represents a progression from a passive, conforming personality type (*guishuxing renge*) to a self-realizing personality type (*ziwo shixianxing renge*). Xu contends that this is indeed the genesis of a modern economic consciousness.

> The evolution of the Chinese personality is itself related to China's changing position in the global economic grid. The higher China's position, the quicker the transformation. The popularisation of the self-realized person is without any doubt the overriding trend. The extensive manifestation of this model, moreover, depends upon the establishment and perfection of market economy mechanisms through the whole of society. . .
>
> (Li Ling, 1996, p. 5)

In keeping the faith with the Marxist base-superstructure model, it is the economic restructuring rather than culture itself that determines the way people think. In this distinctive application of technological determinism, the process of personality transformation is driven by the motor of reform. From a Marxist perspective, however, unchecked material progress creates imperfect markets and exploitation. Therefore, in order to regulate people's often unreal expectations of prosperity, laws, procedures, and civic values need to be distilled and explained through the mass media and public campaigns. The propagandists for the commodity economy are the same Party intellectuals who two decades earlier saw the commodity as a bourgeois menace.

Of course, it's easy enough to spot the contradiction: the economic base and the cultural superstructure engage in a clumsy tango. The market is officially acknowledged as a 'good thing', and commercial success stories are used as incentives for the backward elements. The broad population needs to be 'guided' into the dance and taught correct etiquette in case their desire for freedom and wealth completely erase the ethical values carefully imprinted into the collective psyche by decades of socialist propaganda. And the end result is that culture is something that cannot be trusted; it needs to be watched lest it take the lead in directing the dance of reform.

The rise of *Homo economicus* and the entry of economic language into everyday life show how the dance between economism and culture proceeds. First, culture leads. Where the Chinese Communist Party once believed they held a monopoly on truth by controlling information distribution, the Internet, along with foreign content on television, short-wave radio, and the direct influence of foreign managerial technologies, has disrupted this hegemony. Different truths are dispersed along the many information pipelines now available to the Chinese population.

Second, the economy takes the lead but the government becomes the director of the orchestra rather than the dance partner. While many within the Chinese leadership yearn for a return to the good old days of economic determinism and an obedient cultural sphere, the commodity economy and the liberalisation of industry represents a shift towards a new mode of social regulation, by which the state allows the market to act as the arbiter of social relations. This shift in governance, a version of 'authoritarian liberalism' (see Jayasuriya, 2000) allows people more freedom and gradually moves the responsibility of self-regulation back to the individual. This is not to say that governmental power evaporates. Rather it disperses, primarily into the hands of bureaucratic entrepreneurs who have the capacity to act as a buffer between the state and the market in much the same manner as officials did in the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Third, there is a change of partners: the Chinese government is impelled to further liberalise, to open its borders to information and foreign investment in its cultural and media industries as a condition of its entry into the World Trading Organisation.
In the transition to the socialist commodity economy, the consumer has already been celebrated as the mould for the new economic citizen. In the words of one of the new engineers of the soul, 'in a market economic system, individuals conducting economic activities no longer realise their value through the collective, but by creating and owning social material wealth.' (Han Qingxiang, 1996). To achieve this, however, the prisoners of dependency need to be made free through a process of education and inculcated into the values of enterprise. Popular culture thus provides one of the principal channels by which freedom can be distilled.

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[1] Feng was associated with Wang Shuo's 'Seahorse' audio-visual media collective in the early 90s. He later became thee most visible member of the 'Wang Shuo clan' (*Wang Shuo yi zu*). See Dai 2000.
[2] Critics who have discussed these serials include Xie (1994) and Yin (1999).
[3] A substantial part of the production costs came from a loan from the Bank of China. The Beijing Television Arts Centre established a deal with CCTV which saw the former recoup substantially more revenue through selling advertising space (see Keane 2000).
[4] The series rated 55.9% in Beijing during its initial broadcast. Fan Ren (1993).
[5] *Beijingers in New York* drew its inspiration from the literature produced by Chinese overseas students (*liuxuesheng wenxue*) during the 1980s, a period in which 'overseas fever' (*chuguo re*) gripped the imaginations of many Chinese. Following on from the success of the novel Manhatten Lady by Zhou Li, about a Chinese woman's conquest of New York society, Cao Guilin's *Beijing ren zai NiuYue* was published in the Beijing Evening News (*Beijing wanbao*) in October 1991, reportedly increasing circulation five-fold. It had also been broadcast as a radio play. In contrast with the television serial, the novel was a monologue of blatant self-aggrandisement by the said Mr. Cao, celebrating his status as a boss (*laoban*) in the New York Chinatown sweatshop industry.

[6] Liu's article is seriously flawed in many ways. Notwithstanding the fact that a sweatshop industry is a pretty poor vehicle to carry the idea of transnational capital, she seems to have gleaned much of her information from the back cover of the paperback by Glen Cao. Liu begins by saying that between 800-900 million people watched the serial. This is really an extraordinary claim. The serial rated well in Beijing but had relatively lukewarm success in South China. For some reason Liu decides to translate the title as 'Beijing Soujourners in New York'. The original Chinese translation was 'A native of Beijing in New York'. She misquotes the introductory preamble to each episode. She attributes the wrong director to the Beijing Television Arts Centre. She confuses novel and television drama (p. 782) and argues that in the novel Ningning dies as a result of gangster violence. In actual fact Ningning doesn't die in the novel; in the serial she turns up at a funeral, which is that of a Beijing acquaintance of Wang.
[7] Zhong Yong (1995) makes the point that studies have confirmed that it is Chinese women who are more likely to be successful in Western societies. The serial turns this on its head and portrays the women as weak. Even the 'strong' A Chun becomes emotionally dependent on Wang Qiming.
[8] For a good discussion of the chauvinism of the main character and the misrepresentation of gender see Zhong Yong (1995).